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EPA action raises hopes that someday Revere land will be safe

WHEN A SMALL, rural community is thrust into the national spotlight, seldom is a normal, everyday event responsible. It takes something very big, very good or very bad to make everyone sit up and take notice.

In the case of Revere, in Nockamixon Township, recognition at the federal level is not the result of anything good or beneficial that took place there. Rather, years of environmental abuse have resulted in more than 100 acres of nearby land being listed on the Environmental Protection Agency's priority list of hazardous waste sites. That means the designated property is one of more than 900 such sites considered among the most seriously contaminated in the country.

There hasn't been any legal activity at the former home of the Revere Chemical Co. since 1970. Once a Bucks County court order halted operations at the site, the state Department of Environmental Resources eventually spent close to a half-million dollars getting rid of toxic chemicals left behind. Three years ago the EPA spent another \$125,000 to remove toxic wastes that had been dumped on the land after the state cleanup. All of that time, effort and expense have still not made the area safe, however. So it is sometimes when industry runs amok.

The EPA has cited six firms as possible contributors to the waste hazard and is negotiating with those firms to have them share the costs of studying the problem and doing something about it. There is no real urgency to begin cleanup efforts any time soon, since officially the Revere tract is not considered an immediate threat. But having the chemical dump on the priorities list does give the agency the authority to move quickly if an emergency situation were to develop.

For the people who live near the site, the EPA action should be considered at least a small step in the right direction. So, too, was the township supervisors' decision denying permission for the current owner of the site, Harbucks Inc., to open a quarrying operation on the land. The seriousness of the hazards at Revere are finally being recognized — and admitting that potential disaster is lurking there must necessarily precede corrective efforts.

Harbucks has gone to court in an attempt to gain approval for its stone quarry. But the EPA says that even if approval is granted, no stone will be removed before any toxic materials still on the site are rendered harmless.

Perhaps the long, unfortunate saga of the Revere tract will have a happy ending. At least then future generations of Nockamixon residents will have one less environmental mistake to worry about.

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